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VICTORIA CARPENTER

Temporal Permutations in Octavio Paz's 'Piedra de sol' (1957)

Octavio Paz's seminal poem 'Piedra de sol' (1957) is, arguably, his most significant poetic work and one of the most studied by scholars and students of Latin American literature. In general, critics and analysts agree that 'Piedra de sol', like other poems in the collection *La estación violenta* (where the poem appears), represents Paz's fascination with Mexico's Aztec heritage. While I accept the validity of the argument that 'Piedra de sol' is a poetic version of the Aztec solar calendar,¹ I would like to re-examine the poem's complex temporal nature in more detail, and approach it from the point of view of quantum physics and its understanding of time. I have used this foundation previously to analyse the works of Mexican Onda of the 1960s to 1970s, and the outcome of this application indicated that it may be possible to extend its use to other, more traditional and more frequently studied texts.

I have argued elsewhere that 'Piedra de sol' has twenty overlapping timeplanes: nineteen in the poem and one more located outside the poem.² This approach has mostly explained the poem's conflicting temporal nature: if the narrator exists in the objective reality his lover occupies the subjective reality, and therefore the interaction between the two creates a discord between linear and non-linear (cyclic or spiral) timelines, which I termed 'timeplanes' to avoid the oxymoronic use of 'non-linear timelines'. The analysis was successful in explaining the relationship between the narrator and his lover, but skirted the issue of relationship between timeplanes, especially between the in-poem timeplanes and the one outside the text.

¹ See Bernard 1967, Phillips 1972, Pacheco 1979, and Fein 1986: 67–8.

² Carpenter 2001: 499; also see Table 1.